166 made fifty years ago, such a whole represented from 350 to 700
621 or 800 persons — while present-day villages rarely average more
361 than 100 inhabitants. With peace restored, the grouping has relaxed and divided into its constituent elements which have broken away to form neighboring hamlets. A special word, ngòra, is the name given to these hamlets which are considered as still forming the same whole.

621 Linked with the virile character of Fang society is certainly
562 [132] the accent on the separation of sexes as shown in daily
● 571 life. For the woman, the living place is the hut; for the man it
344 is essentially the "guardhouse." M. H. Kingsley writes: "The men spend most of their time in palaver houses built at each end of the street, while the women bring bowls of food the whole day
[784] long," (3) without being able to enter the abèñõ, which is absolutely

3. Travels in West Africa, p. 154.

forbidden them. H. Trilles defines this abèñõ as the place "where the men assemble to deal with community affairs, war, marriage,
[574] lawsuits, etc...," and where strangers are welcomed. In addition it is the place where the young men receive a large part of their education, where they learn, according to L. Mba, the most im-
621 portant interdicts (éki). Males of the same nd'è bòt assemble in
562 the abèñõ, which forms a virile grouping and one of kinship. In
571 its midst the authority of the "eldest" is expressed. He is both the symbol and the regulator of the life of the group, and the intermediary between it and the ancestors. Here not only are important transactions regulated, but work is also organized. The life of each one is subject to the control and the nearly constant censure of all. In it is created a cohesion so that this group is the most resistant element of Fang society. It is through the medium of this group, that the traditional Fang is assessed, is isolated as an individual, by the foreigner; he is not known in the first place as X but as a man attached to the abèñõ of Y. Such a grouping therefore represents a strong "community": the fusion, which favors effective kinship to the maximum (it is based on immediate filiation and "fraternity"), worship of the same ancestors, and joint

621 participation in the same tasks, tends – if one may venture the
562 play on words – to the confusion of its members. On the other
571 hand, the women it controls do not form such a coherent whole; they represent different clans, different modalities of kinship; they are the center of virtual conflicts (between female "relatives" and female "relations by marriage," between co-wives); except for the wives of the same man, who live together, they do not have a common living place.

621 The nd'è bòt – and, more precisely, this virile whole made
571 up of relatives belonging to the same guardhouse (abèñõ) – harbors,
578 however, latent antagonisms, which are the result of the privilege
614 linked with ancestry [133] or seniority. These tensions can come to a head when disputes arise usually from economic causes, such as circulation of wealth or of women, or allocation of farming land. They help to explain the very variable size of the groupings considered as villages, and the phenomena of aggregation and disintegration of the latter according to circumstances. But both of these movements are effected as a function of the minor lineage which is the nd'è bòt.

621 This grouping may by itself constitute a separate unit of about
571 ten persons or a village with up to a hundred inhabitants. When a
614 village is old, with a large population (200 to 300 persons or more), it cannot remain organized around a single common hearth. It is arranged around several centers corresponding to the sons of the founder or their successors. Thus the village of Ebiane (Yéngwi in the vicinity of Oyem) has 235 inhabitants distributed in three groups representing the respective posterity of three brothers. We have already stressed the fact that the heads of minor lineages are at the level of the same segment. The village of Afénane (Yébimvé of the Oyem region) with more than 300 inhabitants also consists of the posterity of three brothers, and each of the nd'è bòt occupies a definite position on the village street, according to the following diagram:

621 The groupings are located according to the order of their
571 pre-eminence, that of the eldest being at the back in direct con-
614 tact with the chief's hut. Also, grouping 1 does not represent the whole of the lineage descended from the eldest brother (Ekòrò Ngòm); the latter divided at the level of the sons of Ekòrò Ngòm into three elements, of which one is at Afénane and the two others make up the very close villages of Messia (139 inhabitants) and M'Fagne (97 inhabitants).

621 This whole Yébimvé group, consisting in a limited area of
571 nearly 1,000 persons, is interesting to the extent that it shows
578 how the "major" lineages (which we have described above under
614 the name of abial è bòt) and the "minor" ones determine residence in a definite zone and a village. Two brothers led a migratory group [134] of Yébimvé from the Cameroons to the territory occupied today by their posterity. A conflict arising from the unequal distribution of the women acquired from foreign villages lead to the first rupture. Each of the two brothers moved away with the group he controlled, and the memory of past antagonisms has remained sufficiently alive to prevent any attempt today at recombining the members.

621 The initial cleavage can be presented in the following man-
571 ner: (Table VII on following page.)
614 The cleavage is expressed in relation to a common origin (A) which represents the head of the "major" lineage and gives rise to the first rupture which we mark with a double line. The two nd'è bòt have separated and settled in spite of all in adjacent regions. But these groupings have themselves been subject to new fragmentations since then. We represent the second of these where they occur [135] at the level of the third generations (after III, V, and VII), giving rise to the creation of villages very close to one another and able to co-operate and, above all, to regroup if required by circumstances.

These observations show that the nd'è bòt is a true residential unit. They show how the cleavage becomes possible as soon as this unit reaches a certain size (a size, from the point of view of security and economic demands, making it viable as a separate unit); but the distance (in the sociological sense) between fragments varies

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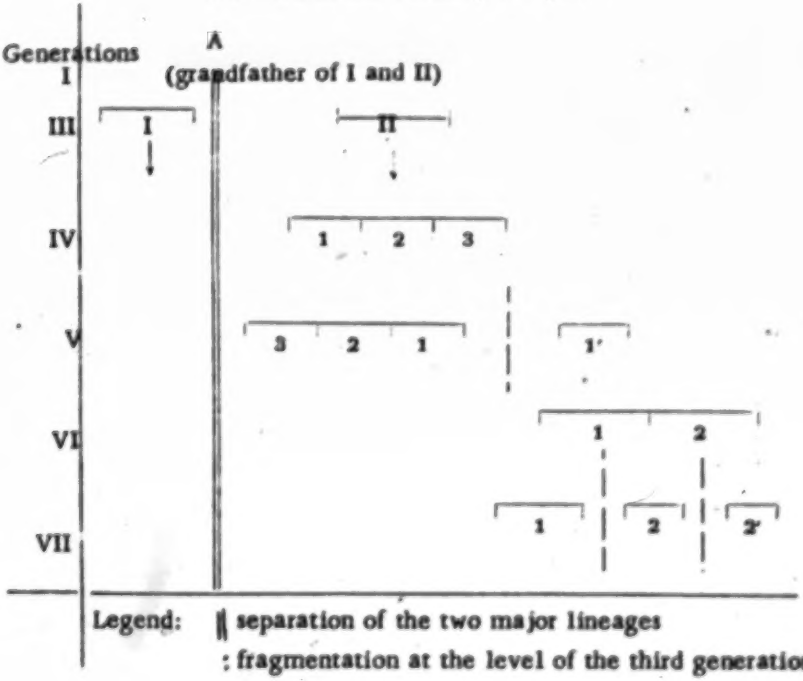
614

in terms of the circumstances which gave rise to the rupture and of the necessity to reserve eventual co-operation. The instability of the Fang village until recent times is certainly due to the nature of the old economy and to a poor capacity for disposition of land space, but also to a type of organization that does not permit (or permits badly) the control of large groupings. These have been made necessary only by lack of security.

Table VII

Yébimvé in the Vicinity of Oyem



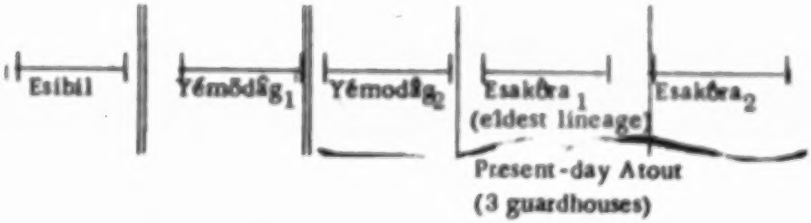
Legend: ‖ separation of the two major lineages
: fragmentation at the level of the third generations.

In the case of mixed villages where groupings belonging to different clans are found assembled together, usually following an administrative alteration of the population, instability appears to be more marked and distribution into definitely located nd'è bòt becomes a necessity. Such a grouping thus adds divisions which involves the co-existence of clan elements foreign to the

621 divisions already existing. This occurs even in the case of small
571 villages. We give the example of Atout in Mitzic region founded
614 by some Esibil to whom were added some Yémŏdâg and some Esakŏra.

Table VIII

Village of Atout



Legend: definitive separation

division into nd'ê bŏt making up Atout.

The founding group and a large part of the Yémŏdâg have already seceded; the Esakŏra grouping has divided into two nd'ê bŏt (the "elder" and the younger), which represents a first [136] phase of the relaxing of bonds, for this division is not necessitated by the as yet reduced size of the group.

The mixed villages – called mfulana mŏyôg, mixture of clans – have necessitated the creation of an embryonic form of chefferie [French administrative district]; the recognition of an authority based outside "kinship." Thus, when a fairly large grouping is concerned, the chief is careful to settle apart and to have at his disposal a guardhouse other than the one in which the members of his nd'ê bŏt assemble. But except for the attempts of the government to "construct" this chefferie, nothing justifies such an organization to maintain the cohesion of the village grouping it controls. The political problem – Fang society has been classed among the "anarchies" or "stateless societies" – in fact conditions

62 all future progress to the extent to which it allows (or does not allow)
57 the maintenance of sufficiently large and stable village units.
614

Political Authority and Judicial Authority

554 Taking Fang society as an example, Dr. Cureau speaks of
622 "a phenomenon of a stretching ... of the social bloc into a hierarchy based either on filiation or on intellectual and particularly moral superiority, both of which principles have their practical value according to the times." (1) He insists on a fact we have

1. Work already quoted, p. 332.

pointed out, the lack of a hierarchical organization, [with only] the simple existence of pre-eminences. The language itself gives [RG] proof of this fact by not having a special word to designate the chief, using ẽsa when the pre-eminence is in a way genealogical, nkuma when it is based on wealth, ẓoé (from ẓu, to say) when it justified by eloquence and the ability to command. By magnifying this statement, A. Cureau contrasts the Fang groupings with those of other peoples as being "anarchical tribes" as opposed to "organized tribes." He writes: "Authority is occasional and momentary ... Edvoughe has carried the votes in such-and-such a difficult palaver, the whole assembly obeys for a moment this ephemeral chief; tomorrow Nzokh will have succeeded Edvoughe in the leadership of opinion; here then the struggle against one and all takes place between constantly changing and constantly renewed contestants." (2)

2. Ibid., p. 326.

In a similar sense the informants of the Commission for [137] Historical Investigation assert that the chief was "in a word the one from whom the community expected the greatest services." (1)

1. Official report of the fifth session.

In the same vein there are continual complaints from administrators incapable of reviving the powerful traditional chefferies and of acting through their medium.

shed with a roof low enough to /43/ give good protection from the sun. Some villages are placed at right angles to the road; others follow an L or Y plan, with several minseñ. Family "allotments" are separated by hedges of euphorbia, castor-oil plant, hibiscus, and bougainvillea. Sometimes one comes across sheepfolds, although in old-style (and most contemporary) villages small livestock roam at will. A village often includes a guesthouse (ayak).

In building operations the man generally takes charge of the framework and the laths, leaving to the women the preparation and application of the banco /clay daub?/. But European-style huts with their elaborate door frames and often cement floors are more and more the work of specialized artisans, who are paid to supervise the family labor provided by the owner. These men have nevertheless preserved, along with the English term "mason," the old name nloñ nda, literally, hut-weaver, which goes back to the time when huts were made of sewn bark (1).

1. The dwelling continues to evolve: framed doors, windows, and shutters are in general use today. The dimensions of the buildings lead to the construction of a real frame. Finally, to possess a sheet-iron roof is a sign of wealth. In recent years there has arisen a real passion for the improvement of dwelling: in the Cameroons we may estimate that 10 percent of the dwellings now built in the bush are the most modern type. (J.B.)

2. Groupings and Relationships

The main divisions of Pahouin society are both exactly defined in the minds of its members themselves and at the same time uncertain for the European observer, who is constantly tempted to state them clearly in organic forms accessible to his "logic" and who is hindered by the variations or the dialectal confusions of Pahouin terminology. Father Trilles, basing his observations on the Fang of Gabon alone, reached a sort of palaeontological reconstruction of the "Fang nation," extremely theoretical, yet not without basis

571 121 114 [445] however, since traces of it can be recognized in the contemporary movement for Pahouin Regrouping represented in the Cameroons by the U. T. N. K. party (N'Tem Kribi Tribal Union). Such /theoretical/ constructs are still rather risky in our present state of knowledge, and it is better to limit ourselves to a pure and simple description, resorting as little as possible to interpretation, which in any case should be done with hesitancy.

128 571 I shall therefore limit myself here to the attempt to perceive Pahouin society on three essential structural levels, while emphasizing again the necessarily arbitrary and incomplete nature of such a proceeding.

These three levels are the most easily perceptible to the European observer and at the same time the most significant, apparently, in the eyes of the Pahouin themselves. These are, what I shall call, for lack of anything better and because they are the terms particularly retained by the administration, the tribe, the clan, and the extended family or village family. Something will also have to be said about intermediate structures such as lineages, segments /fractions/, and village groups, and a little more on the subject of the household or limited family, whose importance is increasing. /44/

a. The Tribe

649 I designate as "tribe" what Trilles calls "group," while he keeps the term "tribe"—as do many observers in Gabon—for what I call "clan." This is because in southern Gabon there is only one "tribe" in the sense I understand, that of the true Fang, or Fang-Fang as Spanish writers call them.

I know of no Pahouin word specifically denoting tribe, Trilles uses the expression mfulane meyoñ, that is, "all of the clans together." In fact, and this is no doubt significant, the term most commonly used is ayoñ, which also denotes what I call clan. Mfulane meyoñ is used particularly when there is occasion to specify that one is referring to a higher structural level, sometimes also referred to as ngum ayoñ, "the clan as a whole," or meyoñ mese, "all the clans." (1) Nevertheless, the tribe is indeed a reality, in spite of this

1. American translators of the Bible have used ayoñ for "people" as well as for "tribe" and "realm."

614 [192] (yii = to weep; yek = to make a fish dam of wet earth; nyia = mother; nyin = four; enyin = life). Sometimes the differences in name have been explained by geographical origin: the ésa clans would be those in the west, the ye clans those in the east. Actually, we find ye clans and ésa clans in all tribes, in the east as well as the west. Yet the geographical explanation should perhaps not be altogether rejected but rather associated with a sexual interpretation.

823 571 614 The Pahouin do, in fact, seem to have ascribed their system of directions to the apparent movement of the sun or, perhaps, to the line of their migration. The west would then be associated with the right, mbo nnôm = male side, the east to the left, mbo ngal = female side (1). This polarity would indicate a series of little-known insti-

1. According to Largeau, north is on the right (male), south on the left (female), which is understandable if directions are based on an E-W line of march. See below.

In Zoll'Owambe's description of the bilaba (no. 125) imported merchandise (male?) comes from the north, local merchandise (female) from the south, while he uses to designate the south the term nsak, meaning "interior," "upstream," or "east," a meaning comparable with that of nké, west or downstream.

tutions, first of all, the joking relationship, awusô, derived in turn from the great national sô rite. In fact, I think I observed that the awusô relationship existed almost always between an ésa clan and a ye clan: Esakoé-Yekomba, Esaébeñ-Yenjôk, Esel-Yembôñ, etc. Certain points may also suggest a link with the former marriage custom and a kind of potlatch called bilaba (2).

2. Another explanation makes the ésa clans originally segments of the ye clans; this interpretation could also account for the joking relationship.

614 The problem is not made easier by the knowledge that certain ésa clans identify themselves with ye clans in other tribes and that there